

THE MASTERS AS FACTS AND IDEALS

BY

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A. P. SINNETT, Esq.

IN THE CHAIR.

The Masters as Facts and Ideals.

MR. SINNETT AND FRIENDS,—Almost a year ago I stood on this same platform to address, in this hall, an audience on my return from the Indian land. Since then much has happened. Myself I have travelled far and wide—to the other side of the world, to the lands that we may say lie beneath our feet; back from those lands to India, and travelling through India once again from the South to the farthest North; and then back again from India here, knowing that while I was away there had been much of attack, much of difficulty, much of disturbance; hearing first a rumour in the far-off antipodes of doubt and of challenge, of so-called exposure, and of virulent abuse. And then when I came nearer, as far as India, gaining more particulars, hearing details of the attack, but still too far away to take effective part in the struggle, and, bound by other duty, unable to come at once back to the land where, outwardly at least, the struggle was at its hottest. When the time came that engagements permitted me to return, when the time came that once again I could stand in this hall to face an English audience, I thought it well to choose for subject that point round which the reality of the attack had raged, and to take up in the first

words that I should speak in this country the most really important matter at which the comments had been levelled while I was away. For I know that wherever there is difficulty there is the place where the brave soldier should be found; and I did not forget that a writer in our English tongue had spoken of some who stood by religion when she walked in silver slippers in the sunshine amid applause, but were ashamed to stand beside her in shadow and under outrage, ashamed when she was clothed in rags instead of in purple. But I have learned in a stormy life that the moment for defence is the moment of attack; that not when there is sunshine is one's word so necessary as when the storm-clouds gather and when difficulties are on every side. For the time to be loyal to truth is when truth is attacked; the time to be faithful to knowledge is when knowledge is assailed; and I should deem that those of us who know the truth of the existence of the Mahâtâmâs were traitors to truth and renegades to their responsibility, if they allowed themselves to be silent because laughed into silence by ridicule, or allowed themselves to deny their knowledge because the fact with which that knowledge is connected has been outraged by fraud and assailed by unfair dealing. Therefore, I choose the subject for my first address; therefore I come to lay before you evidence that I think worthy of your consideration, and to ask for it your patient attention and your thoughtful and deliberate weighing.

“Mahâtâmâs, as Facts and Ideals.”—I have taken

the double title, for there are some who know Them not as facts, to whom yet the ideal is valuable, precious, and inspiring. Not every member of our Society believes in the existence of Mahâtâmâs. There are many and many who are within the limits of the Society who have no knowledge and no belief upon the subject; and it is the rule of our Society that no declaration of faith shall be asked from any one who enters, save in the brotherhood of man, without the distinctions that on the surface are set up. So that within the limits of the Society you may have alike believer and non-believer in the present existence or the past existence of these great Teachers. But I, who believe in Them, and know Them to exist, speak here not in the name of the Society which has no creed, but in my own and in the name of others who share this belief or this knowledge with myself; and before you I am going to place what I believe to be rational evidence worthy of consideration—evidence that you can think over at leisure and make up your minds upon as you will; and I speak also for the sake of the ideal, for the ideals of the race are precious, and cannot lightly be either outraged or denied. For great is this ideal of the Mahâtâmâ, despite the idle laughter that has been used—for the name is merely the Sanskrit for “Great Spirit”—despite the laughter and the ridicule and the foolish talk which have gathered round the name. This mockery is a danger to a great ideal, valuable far beyond the bounds of the Theosophical Society. For there is not one great religion that has raised and

elevated the minds of men, there is not one mighty faith that has led millions to a knowledge of the spiritual Life and the possibilities of human growth, there is not one that has not founded that belief on a Divine Man, there is not one that does not look back, as its Founder, to one of these mighty Souls that have brought knowledge of spiritual truth to the world. Look back to the past as you will, take what faith you choose. Everyone of them is founded on this same ideal, and looks backward for its Teacher to a Man Who is divine in his life. Around this ideal gather all the hopes of men, around this ideal gather the future destinies of humanity. For unless man be a spiritual Being, unless he have within himself the possibility of spiritual unfoldment, unless there is some evidence available that men have become perfect, that it is not only a dream of the future, but a reality which the race has already realized, unless it be true that for you and for me there are open the same mighty possibilities that have been proved possible in the past by those who have achieved, then the hopes of men rest on no foundation, the longings of men after perfection have in them no certainty of realization, humanity remains but the thing of a day, instead of being heir to a boundless immortality. That man may become divine, that it is which has inspired the greatest of our race, which has cheered the miserable in their agony, and has glorified the future with a hope which is not a lie. That is why I defend the ideal. For what is the Mahâtmâ? He is the man who has become perfect, he is the man who

has reached union with the Divine, he is the man who by slow degrees has developed the possibilities of the spiritual nature, and stands triumphant where we are struggling to-day. Every religion, I said, has borne witness to him. You find that every religion of the world looks back to a Divine Teacher. You may have the name of Zoroaster in Persia, of Laotze in China, of Manu in India, of the Buddha in later days, of the Christ in Palestine, everyone of them the Divine Man, Who has brought the certainty of human perfection to those who have come within the range of His influence. That is the ideal which is being outraged to-day, and for the sake of that ideal it is that I stand to speak before you to-night.

And now what shall be the line of our evidence? I propose first to suggest that the theory is a probable theory on the lines of natural evolution; that very briefly, in order to lead the way to the positive evidence. Then I propose to turn to the evidence for the existence of these perfected Divine Men in the past; then to come on from that to the evidence for their existence in the present; then—because without this last part the lecture would remain unpractical for us—then to show how it is possible for men to become perfect, a slight sketch at least of the methods by which the Divine Man becomes.

First, then, for the theory that the existence of Masters is in itself probable and in accordance with the analogy of nature as we see it around us, as we know it in the past. Few to-day, probably, will dispute the fact of evolution. Few will deny that our race pro-

gresses, and that cycle after cycle you will find nations advancing and reaching higher and higher pinnacles of knowledge, higher and higher pinnacles in growth and in development. Theoretically there is nothing impossible or absurd in the theory that taking into consideration the vast periods of time which have elapsed since man first trod this earth, taking into consideration the enormous differences that we see to-day between the lowest savage and the highest man as he is generally known, taking these differences in the present, and the vast spaces of time for evolution that lie behind us in the past, it is not at least irrational or absurd that there may have been evolution carried to a point in the case of some individuals as much above the evolution of the higher civilized man of to-day, as he is higher than the lowest type of savage in existence still. Nor is that all. It is not only that we have enormous ranges of time behind us, but that there are traces of mighty civilizations which show that the race had climbed high in knowledge, high in philosophy, high in science and in religion, thousands upon thousands of years ago, nay! I might say centuries of thousands of years. For looking backwards you see traces of mighty civilizations which imply the presence of men of a most advanced type, and it is scarcely rational to suppose that the so much talked of evolution has been nothing more than a mere ebb and flow, leaving nothing as result, nothing more than successive periods of high civilization and then of utter barbarism, and civilization again re-begun with no links to preserve continuity

of knowledge. It is not at least impossible, and in a moment we shall see signs that it is probable, that out of that mighty past some will have grown upwards, advancing higher and higher and perfecting the human race in individuals, as slowly the general race will in its turn become perfect. Not impossible, not even improbable, remembering that progress is the law of nature, and the vast spaces of time during which humanity has lived.

But from that mere possibility, which I take because it is well to clear out of the way at the outset the idea that the theory is in itself impossible and absurd, turning from that mere possibility, let us take historical evidence, and let us see whether history does not, from time to time, show some gigantic human figures which stand out above and beyond the men of their time and the ordinary height of humanity ; whether there is not evidence which cannot be denied that such Men are not merely the products of popular imagination, that They are not merely men of the past, exaggerated by popular tradition and seen magnified, as it were, through the haze of centuries. I speak of those Great Ones to whom I alluded, Who have been the Founders of the great religions of the world. It is not only that there is unbroken tradition, and that the religions remain which these Men builded, but there is more than tradition, there is more than a religion which has grown ; there is a literature, marked, definite, distinct, whose antiquity no scholar denies, although some may claim for it a vaster antiquity than others may be ready to concede.

Take the later dates; they will serve my purpose, though I do not regard them as accurate. Take the later dates that would be given you by the Orientalists who have studied the literature of China, of Persia, of India, to say nothing of later times. You have there certain books regarded as sacred, books for which the religion has claimed what may fairly be termed an immemorial antiquity. You have amongst the Chinese their ancient sacred books; you have amongst the Pârsis, the followers of Zoroaster, their books, also now translated into your own tongue. You have from India the Vedas, the Upanishads, to say nothing of the later works, and I might, without possibility of challenge, give you long lists of mighty works which are held as Scriptures by the believers in these faiths. Who wrote those works, and whence the knowledge? That they exist is obvious. That they must have authors can scarcely be denied. And yet those works from a far-off antiquity show a depth of spiritual knowledge, a depth of philosophic thought, a depth of insight into human nature, and a depth of moral teaching so magnificent, that the greatest minds of our own day, both in morals and in philosophy, must admit that those writings are greater than they can produce, and that the modern world can show nothing which even approaches them in sublimity.

It is not a question of tradition, but of books; not a question of theory, but of fact; for if the books are so great, the morality so pure, the philosophy so sublime and the knowledge so vast, their authors must have had the knowledge which therein you find incorporated.

And the testimony of millions upon millions of human beings answers to the reality of the spiritual truth, and nations are guided by the teachings that thus have come down. Nor is that all. These teachings are similar wherever you find them. The same teaching of the unity of the Divine Life out of which the Universe has grown; the same teaching of the identity of the Spirit in man with the Spirit from which the Universe has come; the same teaching that man by certain methods may develop the spiritual Life in himself and come into positive knowledge of divinity, and not only hope and faith. So that you have, coming down from far-off times, at least this fact which cannot be denied: that some men lived in the far-off past whose thought was great enough, whose morality was pure enough, whose philosophy was sublime enough, to outlast the wrecks of civilization and the destructive force of time, and that to-day your Orientalists are translating for the teaching of the modern world that which mighty men of old once taught, and find the grandest thoughts to which the race has given birth in these Scriptures that have come down from the most ancient times.

That some then have lived far greater than ourselves, that some have lived whose knowledge goes far beyond the knowledge that we possess, that we still learn in philosophy and in spiritual matters from these far-off Teachers Who spoke millenniums ago; that is a fact that cannot be denied. That there have been Divine Men in the past that we speak of as Mahâtmâs, that They have left the testimony to Their

existence in this mighty and sublime literature, that is the first line of argument—the establishment of the existence in the past, the proof that such Men have lived and have taught, and that by Their teaching They have guided and helped millions of the human race. That Their teaching has been identical in its main outlines, that Their teaching is identical in its moral force, that the spiritual truths enunciated have come down unchanged through the centuries: so far, at least, we can speak with certainty, the ground so far is solid beneath our feet.

The statements in this literature appeal to human experience. They not only say that certain things are, but they say these things can be known. They not only declare the reality of the Soul, but they say that that reality can be proved; so that the teaching stands in this position, that it announces certain alleged facts which remain verifiable for all time, thereby affording a continually accumulating proof of the reality of the knowledge of Those who first gave the statements to the world.

Pass from that to the next point in the argument—that these statements have been verified by experience and are being verified to-day. Take for instance such a land as India. There you have an unbroken tradition, a tradition which comes down to the present time, a tradition that there always have been Teachers Who may be found, Teachers who possess the knowledge which is hinted at in the books of which I speak, Who can add the practical teaching to the theoretical statement, and enable people to verify by

experiment that which is said to be true in the literature to which I have alluded. Ask any Indian of to-day what is his belief on this question, and he will tell you, if he has not been westernized, and you can gain his confidence, that always in his land there has remained the belief that these Men have existed in the past and have not passed out of existence in the present, that They have more and more withdrawn from the ordinary haunts of men, that They have become more and more difficult to discover as materiality has made its way and spirituality has diminished; but that still They can occasionally be found, that still the first steps of the Path are open. And not only is there that belief, but you will find scattered throughout India many many men who, while they have not reached the point of Mahâtmâship, have taken certain steps above the physical plane, and have developed in themselves powers and capacities which the ordinary Westerner would look on as absolutely impossible of attainment. I do not now speak of the Mahâtmâs, but of the hundreds of so-called Yogîs scattered through the jungles and the mountains of India, some of whom habitually exercise remarkable powers—powers which here would seem incredible, but of which there is ever-accumulating testimony coming to you from the mouths of travellers who collect and who record the facts which they themselves have come in contact with. For the earlier stages of the development of the inner man are not so difficult of attainment, and in a country like India, where there is not the difficulty of scepti-

cism to overcome, because there the belief has existed for thousands of years, you will find many and many a man who exercises the lower psychical powers, and a few who have gone far beyond that stage and exercise either the higher psychic faculties or the really spiritual powers of man. And you can find some who have personal experience, some who have individual knowledge of Teachers, of Masters, Who train Their pupils in the higher path of what is called the Râj, or the Kingly, Yoga, that is, the Yoga which primarily trains the mind rather than the body, which works by concentration of the mind, by meditation and by the evolution of the higher mental faculties, on which there is so much discussion here, and who by a definite system of training are able to consciously use powers of the mind which enable the possessor to pass beyond physical limitations, and passing out of the body to receive instruction which he is able then to bring back to the lower consciousness and impress on the physical brain, proving by his knowledge the reality of his teaching, and proving the existence of his Master by this knowledge which from Him he has obtained.

That then would be the next line of evidence available. Not available, you may fairly retort, to the majority of yourselves. But then you are surely bound to remember, as reasonable men and women, that if you desire knowledge you must seek it where the knowledge is to be found, and that it is as absurd for a number of men, who have never investigated, who have never even tried to investigate, who have never

travelled, to sit here in a London office and write on that of which they have no knowledge, as it would be for some ignorant Indian, who has never had the slightest experience of your Western experiments, say in the Royal Institution, to sit down and declare that those are absolutely impossible and ludicrous, because he himself has not travelled here and has not had the opportunity of seeing them performed. You must deal with evidence on rational lines, and if you cannot yourselves come into contact with certain facts, with certain phases of human life, you must either remain ignorant—and then you should be silent—or you should take the testimony of those who have carefully investigated, and have laid the result of their investigations before you.

And that leads me to my next line of argument. Suppose such men existed in the past, suppose we admit, as every religion admits for its own Founder—though it may deny as to the Founders of other religions—suppose we admit that in the past Divine Men have lived, suppose that, believing in the immortality of the Spirit, we are bound to admit that They must still exist somewhere if They ever existed at all; then the next question will be: Do these Men of the past exist in the present? Can They be reached? Can They be known? And are there others Who have reached a similar point, Whose existence may be supported by evidence which at least is worthy of consideration? Do They still exist? Here I am going into a line of thought which I should adopt if I were trying to prove to you the

existence of any person living in a country which you had not visited, living under conditions which you had not yourself experienced. That it can be absolutely demonstrated in every case I admit to be impossible. I cannot demonstrate to you, for instance, the existence of Count Tolstoi. If you do not travel to Russia, if he does not happen to come here, and you do not happen to meet him, I cannot show you as an absolute matter of demonstration that he exists. But I could bring you evidence that would convince any reasonable man; I could show you evidence which would be admitted in any Court of Law; I could show you that there is no reason for denying his existence merely because you have not personally met him, and therefore obtained what you would call ocular proof of his existence.

Now what is the proof for the existence of Divine, of perfect Men living at the present time, reachable under certain conditions? What evidence can I submit to you for that? There are many of you probably who will object to my first witness; but not for the objection am I going to hold back her name—I speak of H. P. Blavatsky. I know the attacks that from every side have been made upon her. I have read the latest attacks that while I was away were brought against her, and in face of those, having read, and read them carefully, I say that there remains enough evidence coming through her, untouched by those attacks, sufficient to put before you for your consideration, and sufficient to win the assent of rational men. H. P. Blavatsky is accused of fraud,

accused of evil conduct, accused of being nothing more than rogue and charlatan and impostor; but there are certain facts remaining which you will have to deal with even if you believe, as I do not believe, in the truth of these exaggerated charges that are brought against her. Take if you will, for a moment—though I should deny it—take if you will some of the worst of those charges—that she had no contact with the Mahâtmâs at all, that she invented Them, that They did not exist outside her imagination, and that everything she said was falsehood, everything that she said and did was intended to mislead. Still you have to deal with the facts of her life, and with the facts of her books. You have to deal with the book known as *The Secret Doctrine*, and if you want to understand that you must read it before you wave it aside, and study it before you laugh at it. And I say this on purpose, because I have read the Appendix in which Mr. Coleman says it is full of plagiarisms, that he can prove here, there, and everywhere that she has borrowed from other books her knowledge; he says that would account for the knowledge therein displayed. But what you have to consider is this, that she never claimed that she discovered the knowledge she gave to the world, that her contention is that this knowledge comes down from a far-off past, is found in every Scripture, in every philosophy; and the very purpose of that book is to quote from every direction, from the Scriptures of every religion, from the writings of every people, in order to show the identity of the teaching and to prove the antiquity of

the doctrine. What is new in the book is not the facts that therein you find. What is new in the book is not what has been found in Orientalists, and may be pointed to in one or another sacred book of the world. What is new is the knowledge which enabled her to select from the whole of these the facts which build up a single mighty conception of the evolution of the Universe, the evolution of man, the coherent synthesis of the whole cosmogony. And that is her title to be the greatest Teacher of our time, because she had real knowledge, not mere book-learning, knowledge which enabled her to collect from scattered books the truths which, fitted together, made one mighty whole; because she held the clue which she was able to follow with unerring accuracy through the maze, and show that all the scattered materials contained within them the possibility of the single building. And her work is the more wonderful because she did it not being a scholar; because she did it not having had the education which would have enabled her to some extent to piece this knowledge together; because she did what no Orientalists have done with all their learning, what not all the Orientalists together have done with all the help of their knowledge of Eastern tongues and their study of Eastern literature. There is not one of them, who out of that tangled mass brought out that mighty synthesis; not one of them who out of that chaos was able to build up a cosmos. But this Russian woman with little education, this Russian woman who was no scholar, and pretended to be none, somewhere or

other she gained a knowledge that enabled her to do what none of your scholars can do, somewhere or other she had a teaching which enabled her to reduce this chaos to order, and to bring out a mighty scheme of evolution which makes us understand the Universe and man. She said it was not hers, she never claimed to have originated it ; she was always speaking of her own want of knowledge and referring to Those Who taught her. But the fact you have to meet is this—the knowledge is there, and stands there for criticism. Not one other person has done it, although the same materials that Mr. Coleman says she used, are open to the whole of the world. And my answer is : Give us then some others who can do as she did. Let us have some more of this plagiarism which is able to gather from so many sources everything that is necessary for a mighty philosophy. Let your boasted scholars do it, and help us to understand, as she helps us to understand, the religions of the world. Let them show us the identity, let them show us the reality, and then we may begin perhaps to revise our opinion of her ; but until that is done her claim remains unshaken, even though you should prove that she may have erred in much, and even although stones may be thrown at her by those who can never rival her in unselfishness, in self-sacrifice and in knowledge.

And the reason that you cannot shake us in our belief in this is because she helped us to knowledge, because we gained from her teaching that which none other gave; because she opened up to us ways of

gaining further knowledge along the same lines, and from the same Teachers Who had taught her. That is why we remain such fools as people think us, in clinging to her and clinging to her memory, for we owe her a debt of gratitude that we never shall be able to pay, and never shall stone be cast upon her grave which I will not try to lift off it, for the sake of the knowledge to which she led me, and the priceless benefits that she gave me in the teaching which she began.

Now the evidence that I ask you to take from her is not the evidence of phenomena. I put that on one side. It is not the evidence of scholarship. She had none, she never pretended to it. It is not the question as to whether or not her life from her childhood was perfect. It is that she had certain definite knowledge acquired somehow, which cannot be accounted for by ordinary education, which she obtained in a comparatively short space of time, which astonished her own family and friends when first she produced it, and which she said she got from certain Teachers—the important fact being that she possessed it, however it may have come into her possession. That is the evidence that I want to lay stress upon, because that is the point which cannot be shaken, and it removes her testimony for the moment from the whole question of fraud of any sort; it remains above it and beyond it. And I say that even if you think the evidence against her convincing that she went at times beyond the truth—I am not saying it is so, but I am saying, suppose you think the evidence convincing—what

then? There remains the fact of this knowledge embodied in *The Secret Doctrine*, which stands there as a witness to her, and which I venture to say cannot be overthrown, and the more you degrade her, the less you make of her, the more you prove the existence of and exalt the Great Ones Who worked through her, and gave her what she produced.

Now, there is another point about another book of hers which is to me of special interest, a book that you may know, *The Voice of the Silence*: that book happened to be written while I was with her at Fontainebleau. It is a small book, and in what I am going to say I speak only of the book itself; I am not speaking of the notes; those were done afterwards. The book itself is what may be called a prose poem in three divisions. She wrote it at Fontainebleau, and the greater part was done when I was with her, and I sat in the room while she was writing it. I know that she did not write it referring to any books, but she wrote it down steadily, hour after hour, exactly as though she were writing either from memory or from reading it where no book was. She produced, in the evening, that manuscript that I saw her write as I sat with her, and asked myself and others to correct it for English, for she said that she had written it so quickly that it was sure to be bad. We did not alter in that more than a few words, and it remains as a specimen of marvellously beautiful literary work putting everything else aside.

Now, Mr. Coleman says that he can find this in a number of other books. I can only hope he did not

read the book before making that statement. For the book is, as I said, a prose poem, full of spiritual inspiration, full of food for the heart, stimulating the loftiest virtue and containing the noblest ideals. It is not a hotch-potch drawn from various sources, but a coherent ethical whole. It moves us, not by a statement of facts gathered from books, but by an appeal to the divinest instincts of our nature. It is its own best testimony to the source whence it came.

Pass now from Madame Blavatsky herself to those she taught. Our Chairman is one of them. Many others are living, here and elsewhere, whom she taught at first, and who have passed from her training into and under the training of her Teachers. And here you have an accumulating testimony of men and women who, of their own authority, by first hand evidence, out of their own experience, testify to the reality of the existence of these Teachers, and to their own personal knowledge of Them, and of the teaching which they have personally received from Them.

I have mentioned during the last week in two of your papers a small part of my own evidence. Mr. Sinnett to-day in his opening speech has alluded to evidence extending in his own case over fifteen years. Many others have done the same, like Countess Wachtmeister, like Colonel Olcott, like others who have given their own individual testimony. Are you going to say that all these people are frauds? With what right do you so condemn them? Are you going to say that they are all fools? But they are men and

women living the ordinary life, men and women who amongst those who know them stand as persons of education, of intelligence, showing the ordinary powers of discrimination and of knowledge that others possess. Are you going to say that we are all mad? That is rather a rash assertion to make against constantly growing numbers of apparently reasonable men and women. What other sort of evidence can you demand for the existence of any one save the evidence of those who know them, of persons of integrity and of honour who are living amongst yourselves? We bear to These our personal testimony, not founded on documents, not founded on writings, not founded simply on letters, and so on, on which there is always possibility of deception arising, but on individual communion with individual Teachers and teaching received which otherwise we could not have gained. That is the kind of evidence you have to deal with; and no case of proving fraud against one or two or three people will upset the accumulating testimony of reasonable men and women, who are coming into connection with those Teachers, and who bear testimony to what they themselves know. That is the kind of evidence that you have to meet, that the kind of testimony that you have to overthrow. And however much you may be amused at smart and clever writing, which takes advantage of the deception practised by one in order to discredit the whole, you can no more discredit this mass of testimony by proving one man to be fraudulent, than you can challenge, say, the reality of real coin because a forger

may circulate some false coin in a community, and people may pass the coin for the moment, and may be deceived into believing that it is real.

But you may say : We want first-hand evidence for ourselves. You can have it ; but you must take the way. You can have the evidence amounting to demonstration for yourselves if you choose to take the trouble, if you choose to give the time. Not an unreasonable demand.

If you want to verify for yourselves the experiments of some great chemist, can you do it by simply going into a laboratory and mixing together the things that you find there? If you want to verify some of the latest experiments in chemical science, do you suppose that you can do it for yourselves, without giving years of trouble and of study to master the science in which you want to carry out a critical experiment? And what would you think of the value of the criticism of some person absolutely ignorant of chemistry, if he said the experiment could not be performed, merely because he was not able to do it without training and without knowledge?

Therefore I said that I would tell you how the Mahâtmâ becomes. For only those who are willing to aim at that goal can obtain the absolute demonstration of the existence of Those who have achieved. That is the price that has to be paid. And without this only probability? Yes, reasonable probability; testimony of others which you would accept on any other matter, on which, in a law-court, you would pass vast sums of money, large estates, or anything else ;

that you can have by simply looking into the available evidence, of which I have been sketching merely the outline. But personal demonstration? For that you must begin yourselves to develop in the way in which Their development has been made; and in order that anyone who desires may begin to follow that line, and follow it to its natural ending, there have been published to the world the preliminary steps upon the Path, the steps that are taken by those who attain the knowledge, the steps that anyone may begin to take, and by which he in his turn may acquire a certainty similar to that which some of us possess. Two little books, especially, have been published, which trace the beginnings of the Path, one called *Light on the Path*, the other, the one to which I before alluded, *The Voice of the Silence*; and in addition to those there are many hints scattered through Theosophical literature, and becoming more and more numerous as the individual experience of disciples increases as the years go on.

How then should an ordinary man or woman begin? If they desire to get evidence for themselves as to the possibility of this development, which in the end will make the Perfect Man—the man become Divine—the first, the early steps, are those which every religion has taught—carefulness and unselfishness in life, discharge of duty in whatever place in life man or woman may happen to be. To use the phrase which is used in this book:* “Follow the wheel of life; follow the wheel of duty to race

**The Voice of the Silence.*

and kin ;" that is a preliminary. For those who would gain knowledge of the Soul must begin in this way, which has ever been taught, by the leaving off of evil ways, and by the following of good ; by purity in life, by service to men, by the unselfish effort, continually repeated, to be useful in whatever place one may be in by the law of nature. The endeavour to discharge to the fullest every obligation, the endeavour to live a life which shall leave the world better than it was found, the endeavour to live nobly, unselfishly and purely—these are conditions laid down for those who would find the Path.

And here let me say that unless reincarnation be true, then most certainly this development is not possible. In no one human life could that long Path be trodden ; in no new-born Soul could be developed these divine possibilities ; unless it is true that the Soul of man comes back life after life to earth, bringing with it to every new life the experience of the lives behind, building up higher and higher character life after life, then indeed the Mahâtmâ would be an impossibility, and the perfection of man would be but the dream of the poet. Reincarnation is taken for granted in the whole of this teaching, as a fundamental fact in nature, on which the perfection of the individual must depend. First then, a man through many lives must set himself to live well, to live usefully, to live nobly, so that he may be born time after time with higher and higher qualities, with nobler and nobler faculties. Next, there is a stage in this human evolution, marked and definite, where the Soul

having long been struggling upwards, raises itself a little beyond the ordinary evolution of man. There are men and women who are exceptionally unselfish, who show exceptional capacities, exceptional intuitions, exceptional love for spiritual things, exceptional devotion to the service of mankind; when those exceptional qualities begin to manifest themselves, then comes the time when one of the great Teachers takes that person in hand individually, in order to guide the further evolution and to train the evolving Soul. The earlier efforts must be made in concert with the great spiritual forces which spread through all the world. But when those have been utilised, when men and women have done their best, as it were, along this line of general spiritual growth, then comes the stage when the Teacher comes forward to guide the further evolution, and certain definite demands are made, if this further evolution is to proceed. These are laid down in the books to which I alluded. Summed up in a phrase, or rather in two phrases, they might be called, "The realization of non-separateness," which I will explain in a moment, and "rigid self-discipline." Non-separateness on the one side, self-discipline upon the other. Now "non-separateness" is a technical word, which means this: that you realise that you are one fundamentally with all that lives and breathes, that you do not separate yourself from any living thing, that you separate yourself neither from the sinner nor from the saint, neither from the highest nor from the lowest of mankind. Nay, not even from the lower forms of living things, and

things called non-living, which you recognise as being one in essence, and one with your innermost self. How shall it be shown? It is shown by the deliberate attempt and training to begin to identify yourself with the sufferings, with the feelings, and with the wants of man. You are told: "Let thy Soul lend its ear to every cry of pain, like as the lotus bares its heart to drink the morning sun. Let not the fierce sun dry one tear of pain, before thyself hast wiped it from the sufferer's eye." But that is not all. "Let each burning human drop fall on thy heart and there remain; nor ever brush it off, until the pain that caused it is removed."* There is the first note. Go out to the sufferer and relieve his pain; but, relieving his pain, let it wring your own heart, and let it remain there as a constant suffering until the cause of that pain has been removed. That is the first stage of non-separateness. Identify yourself with the sorrows and the joys of the world; let the sorrow of everyone be your sorrow, the pain of everyone your pain, the joy of everyone your joy. Your heart, you are told, must answer to every thrill in other hearts, as the string gives back the note of music to which it has been attuned. You must feel the pain, you must feel the agony; nay, you must feel the sin and the shame as your sin and your shame, and make it part of your own consciousness, and bear it, and never try to escape therefrom. You must train yourself in a sensitiveness which will answer to every suffering of

* *The Voice of the Silence*. The other quotations are from the same book.

mankind, and you must carry that out in deed as well as in feeling; for you are told again that: "Inaction in a deed of mercy is an action in a deadly sin." But you must not only realize the pain of the world and make it yours; you must be as hard to yourself as you are tender to those around. You have no time to spend on your own troubles, if the trouble of the world is to become yours. You have no strength to waste on laments over your own grief, if you are to be identified with the sorrows of mankind. And so it is said that you must be as hard as the stone of the mango-fruit to your own pains and sorrows, while soft as its pulp to the pains and sorrows of other men.

And thus life after life you must be trained, life after life becoming more and more identified with all, and breaking down everything that separates man from man. That is why brotherhood is our only condition; because the recognition of that is the first step towards this realization of non-separateness, which is necessary if the disciple is to progress. And the definite training of the disciple is a training which makes him sensitive to the sorrows of all, in order that, feeling, he may be ready to help, and which trains him in this self-identification with the whole, in order that he may at last become one of the Saviours of the world. For as this training proceeds life after life, there gradually develops in this human being an ever-growing sympathy, an ever-deepening compassion, a charity which nothing can stain, and a tolerance which nothing can shake. No injury can give

offence, for the sorrow is for the one who does the injury, and not for the blow which is struck at one's self. No anger can arise against any wrong, for you understand why the wrong is done, and you sorrow for the doer and have no time to waste in anger. You will not condone wrong, you will not say that wrong is right, you will not pretend that good is evil, for that would be the greatest cruelty and would make the progress of the race impossible. But while recognizing the evil, there will be no anger against the evil-doer, for he is one with your own Soul, and you recognise no separation between yourself and him.

To what end? Because as this growth proceeds memory and knowledge will grow; because as this growth proceeds the developing life of the Spirit within the disciple will show itself out more and more in the walks of men, and gradually he will become marked out as a worker for man, a helper for man, a toiler for man, working for him to enlighten his ignorance, to bring him knowledge, and to show him the reality that underlies all the illusions in the world. And he must be hard to himself because he is to stand between man and evil, because he is to stand between his weaker brothers and the dark powers that otherwise might crush them. The illustrations given here of what the disciple must be is that he is to be like a star which gives light to all, but takes from none; that he is to be like the snow which takes on itself the frost and the biting winds, in order that the seeds below may sleep uninjured by

the cold, and have the possibility of growth when the season for growth shall come. There is the training to which submission is demanded by these Divine Teachers; there what they claim from men who desire to be disciples. Not accomplishment at first, but endeavour; not perfection at first, but effort; not certainly the showing out of the ideal, but the striving after it amid whatever failure and amid whatever error. And I ask you if those of us who realise this as ideal, and who know that this is the demand which our Teachers make upon us, is it likely that we should act for the injury of society, or be anything save the servants of men in obedience to Those Whose law we strive to obey? And then, as I said, life after life these qualities develop, until there comes at last a time, when the weaknesses of men have fallen away, when the frailties of human nature have gradually been overcome, when a compassion that nothing can shake, a purity that nothing can soil, a knowledge mighty in its scope, and a spirituality that makes itself felt—when these are the qualities that mark the disciple who is nearing the threshold of liberation; until the day dawns when the treading of this Path is finished, the time comes when the disciple's course is over, and the last possibility of the Perfect Man opens before his eyes. And then for a while the earth, as it were, drops into the background; he stands—the liberated Soul as he is called, the Soul that has won its freedom, the Soul that has conquered human limitations—he stands on the threshold of Nirvâna, of that perfect consciousness and bliss which go beyond possibility

of human thought, which go beyond possibility of our limited consciousness. And as he stands there it has been said that there is silence; silence in Nature, one of whose children is rising beyond her, silence which nothing for a time may break, when the liberated Soul has accomplished its freedom. Silence—and it is broken by a voice: it is a voice that unites into one mighty cry the whole of the misery of the world which has been left behind. A cry from the world in its darkness, in its misery, in its spiritual starvation, in its moral degradation. And in that silence surrounding the liberated Soul, the cry that comes across is the cry of misery from the human race to the Soul that has gone beyond its brothers, to the Soul that is free while they are left in chains.

How shall it go further? Life after life it has learned to identify itself with man; life after life it has learned to answer to every cry of pain. Can it go onward freed, and leave others in chains? can it go onward into bliss, and leave the world in sorrow? Him Whom we call the Mahâtmâ is the liberated Soul Who has the right to go onward, but for Love's sake turns back, Who brings His knowledge to the helping of ignorance, brings His purity to the cleansing of foulness, brings His light to the chasing away of darkness, and takes up again the burden of the flesh till all the race of men shall be free with Him, and He shall go onward not alone, but as father of a mighty family, bringing humanity with Him to share the common goal and the common bliss in Nirvâna. That is the Mahâtmâ. Life after life of effort crowned with

supreme renunciation ; perfection gained by struggle and by toil, and then brought back to help others till they stand where He is standing. Every Soul that stretches out its hands, His hand is ready to help. Of every brother of His race that asks for guidance, His heart answers to the cry ; and They stand there waiting until we are willing to be taught, and give Them the opportunity which They have renounced Nirvâna to secure.

Is that an ideal for scoffing, for laughter, for idle ridicule ? If it be only a dream, it is the noblest dream that humanity has ever dreamed ; the fullest of self-sacrifice, and the most inspiring of ideals. To some a fact—a fact more real than life. But to those to whom it is no fact it might be an ideal ; an ideal of self-sacrifice, of knowledge and of love. That such Men are, some of us know. But even if you believe not in Them, there is nothing in the ideal that is not noble, and by thinking of which you may not grow higher and higher towards the light.

The Christian has the same ideal in his Christ : the Buddhist the same ideal in his Buddha. Every faith has the same ideal in the Man whom it regards as Divine. And we stand as witnesses to all religions that their faith is real and not false ; their Teachers a reality, and not a dream ; and the Teacher is the realisation of the promise in the disciple, the realization of the ideal that we adore. And so to some of us these Divine Teachers, whom we know to live, are a daily inspiration. We can only come in contact with Them as we strive to purify ourselves. We can only learn

more as we practise what already They have taught. And if I have spoken here to-night at first of a theory, then of the historical past, then of the witness that we bear you in the present, and lastly of the steps that all may take if they will, it is because I want to lift the ideal out of all the ridicule that has been heaped upon it, away from all the mud that has been cast upon it, out of the jar and the strife which has been made to surround it.

Blame us as you will, but leave that noble ideal of human perfection untouched. Laugh at us as you will, but do not laugh at the Perfect Man, the man made God, in Whom, after all, the most of you believe. Do not, you who are Christians, be false to your own religion, and leave your Christ only as a matter of faith and not of living reality, as many of you know that He is to-day. And remember that whatever the name, the ideal is the same; whatever the title, the thought that underlies it is identical.

And as you think, you develop; as is your ideal, so gradually your lives will become. For there is this transforming power in thought, that if your ideals are paltry your lives will be paltry; if your ideals are material your lives will be material. Take then this ideal and think of it, and your lives will become penetrated by its purity; you will become the nobler men and the nobler women, because it forms a subject of your thought, and the thought transforms you into its own likeness. It is true that men become like that they worship, it is true that men become like that on which they think. And this ideal of the

Perfect Man has in it the hope for the future of the race. Therefore I plead for it to you to-day, and I point you to the Path by which from an ideal it may become a living reality, turning from a hope into a living Teacher, and from a lofty ideal for aspiration into the Friend and the Master to Whom you may give your life.

